Marx's work as a possibility of self-knowledge as a political subject by

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(Original version)

"Teachers are political subjects, because students are the subject of their own training process. No one can produce consciousness in another, because consciousness is in the subjectivity of the other; but it is clear that conscience is a product of social labor"

EC: I am going to give context from the student perspective. We consider that Marx's theory has not been given the weight it should have within the academic workload of various study programs; that is, it has been set aside. We could even consider that the Marxist position is no longer studied in many places and has been fading over time in others. The reason for this, as far as economics curricula are concerned, is the predominance of the orthodox or neoclassical approach. That leads us to ask: what does Marx teach us as students? Why would it be important to study it today? That is, when seeing a variety of proposals in economic literature, why should we as students read Marx?

JI: I would start by changing the question to why is he not studied more, what could one find in this author? Other questions are associated with this: what does the university exist for? What does the university produce, particularly with regard to the social sciences and, more specifically, the economy? I put it in the following terms: it is not a problem of plurality, it is not that one needs to see different things because it is necessary to have a plural vision in order to then choose between the options. In reality, one needs to know oneself, to know one's own determinations that make one act as a social subject. As an economist, the field of work par excellence is the State, and the sphere of the State is the sphere of political relations, so, even in one's own work activity, one will act as a political subject. But the problem is that students are being trained to be a political subject who does not know himself in the unity of his determinations, who stops at the appearance of being an abstractly free individual. As this training underlies the raison d'être of the university, there is little room to train students who recognize themselves in the unity of their condition as political subjects.

The first issue that arises with this is that, just as teachers act as political subjects, students are the subject of their own training process. Consciousness is the way in which each person carries in his or her person the capacity to govern his or her individual action as an organ of the process of social life; so, no one can produce consciousness in another person, because consciousness is proper to individual subjectivity. But it is also clear that individual consciousness is a product of social labor, and the teacher's job is to operate in the process in which students produce their own consciousness.

So, economic students produce themselves as political subjects, and teachers act in that process as political subjects. Therefore, the problem of studying the different currents is not abstractly one of plurality, but it is the problem of knowing oneself as a political subject. The question "Why do they teach me this and not teach me that?" is associated with the question: What am I as a subject insofar as they impose on me as a condition for my training to study neoclassical economics and do not allow me to study something that makes me wonder about my condition as a political subject? So, the need for a student, and in particular for a student of social sciences, to study Marx is, in general, to confront his own political subjectivity. This does not imply interpreting Marx in one way or another, nor does it imply repeating what Marx says. It implies appropriating his perspective to answer me about my condition as a political subject.

EC: Do you consider that what is prevailing in university education, then, is a construction of a political consciousness of individuals?

JI: Yes! What is formed in the university are political subjects with a certain consciousness.

EC: So that critical part of the students and also of the teachers who are in charge is missing?

JI: Currently the function of the university is to produce labor power for capital, a labor force that does not recognize itself in its own social being. In particular, economists in their specific work, unless they join the academic field, forget about neoclassical economics and do not use it at all. No one performs a production function. In practice, those who record national accounts, for example, clash with neoclassical economics. Thus, what is produced are uncritical individuals unable to ask themselves what they are as subjects beyond immediate appearances; and this has very destructive effects personally, even on themselves and on other individuals.

EC: Is there a need for a reconfiguration of the university so that criticism can be motivated among students?

JI: The problem is whether the accumulation of capital at the national level requires that kind of education or not. Now, as a political subject, as a member of the working class, one has a concrete political action to carry out within the university. I will put it in the following terms: it may not be seen this way, but one is on the enemy's ground. Therefore, one cannot expect the university to become a neutral space. You are fighting to have a course on Marx, while it is likely that you have around thirty on neoclassical economics. So, you cannot even have an education, let's call it 'comprehensive,' with this kind of teaching. Today, universities all over the world, in Latin America, have a reason for existing, and it is not to produce the critical consciousness of the working class. Thus, one is always fighting on enemy territory, and it is well known that when one fights on enemy territory, one suffers the consequences.

EC: What do we have left now as students?

JI: The weaker one is, the more one needs to fight. If you manage to have a subject whose focus is on Marx's developments, you will achieve a significant conquest. We had an experience at the Faculty of Economic Sciences at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA). The formal economics program was entirely neoclassical, so we developed a project to create almost a parallel curriculum. At some point, the authorities realized that we were advancing in such a project and began to put increasingly larger barriers. The structure of the program at UBA lasts four or five years, with a strong degree of specialized training from the beginning. Once the degree was completed, one could go directly into the doctorate. They began to change this: originally, to enter the doctorate it was enough to present a research paper, which they replaced with a mathematics exam. But a mathematics exam is neoclassical economics; it is not addition or subtraction, but differential equations. Leftist students, particularly connected with certain lines of Marxism, began to pursue the doctorate and eventually made up the majority of its students. The response was to impose, in addition to the mathematics exam, exams in microeconomics, macroeconomics, and economic development, all obviously neoclassical. Since this was not sufficient to eliminate the influx of these students, they established a requirement for admission to the doctorate: a master's degree in economics, lasting three years and with absolutely neoclassical content. In short, at a certain point we had the strength to advance within the enemy's territory, and now they have reacted by suppressing the movement. But well, the weaker one is, the more one needs to fight, and it

seems to me that what you are proposing is a struggle that has significant political meaning.

IF: Now, in this context, we have two questions: First, given the differences between contemporary capitalism and the one that was the object of Marx's reflection, are there categories of Marxism that have lost relevance or validity? Second, concentrating geographically on Latin America, where concrete proposals for political, social and economic organization to confront the capitalist relationship are being discussed today, could a vision that is based on Marx's work be useful to understand the different forms of organization that coexist in this region, for example, good living, peasant and indigenous movements that fight for the defense of their territory, among others?

JI: I'll start with the first question. It's not that knowledge serves to organize action; knowledge is action in the process of organizing itself. And the action at play is not that of some abstract social subjects; it is our own action as concrete social subjects. So, the question is: what are we as such social subjects? The process of making progress to answer this does not involve interpreting what Marx said. The process of making progress consists of asking ourselves about our own social relationship, about our own subjectivity, and beginning to answer that. If we don't do this, we wouldn't even reach Marx's starting point; we would remain far from it. At the same time, we must recognize that we have a potential that I describe in the following terms: we have an advantage over Marx because, based on his work, when we ask ourselves about our own social relationship, we can advance in what I call a 'process of recognition from the social point of view,' that is, we are coming to know something again whose knowledge already existed as the product of previous social labor.

EC: Should we recognize, then, our reality based on Marx's work?

JI: Exactly. Rather than recognizing Marx's work, the question is to use it as a tool for our advancement. If one begins by asking oneself about one's general social relation and tries to answer oneself through a process of abstractly individual original knowledge, one can spend one's life circling around the multiplicity of concrete forms that one faces, without being able to move forward.

They ask me about the validity of the categories. Well, if when I begin to look at the real movement of the commodity I find that what I have in front of me corresponds to what Marx proposes, I can continue to advance on a firm basis. If, when I am advancing in this

process, I find something that does not correspond to what Marx has said, I face two options: one, that is, that I am going to follow Marx's path even if I do not find it; this seems to me a serious mistake, because our own action has to be answered by our own determinations. The other option is to ask ourselves, much more carefully, why we are finding in reality a form that is different from the one Marx found. I summarize this as follows: what Marx found was Marx's problem, what we find, this is our problem. So, what to do when Marx affirms something that we do not recognize in our real object? Well, Marx knew the reasons why he affirmed what he affirmed, but it is no longer possible for us to ask him. And, far from it, it is not possible in our process of knowledge to interpret its reasons as we please. On the contrary, the reproduction of the concrete by the way of thought, as Marx defined the dialectical method, necessarily subjects to criticism the knowledge previously produced by itself, and therefore that produced by Marx, by demanding that it give a new account of the reason for the real concrete that we are confronted with.

I will give an example. Today it is common to hear that we must start from the existence of new social subjects; I ask myself about the determinations of these social subjects and I arrive at the commodity, I arrive at capital, and what I find is that the simplest specific determination of my political subjectivity is that of being a member of the working class. And I do not come to this conclusion because Marx tells me so in his texts, but because I recognize it as such in my real determinations, armed with the method proposed by Marx.

So, we have two advantages over Marx. The first, to which I referred earlier, is that we have the product of their original knowledge process as a tool so that our individually original cognitive process has the power of being a process of recognition from the social point of view. The second is that we are confronted with the same social relation developed for 150 years longer than Marx did. That which Marx could only face as something merely hinted at, we have before us with enormous development. Thus, consequently, we cannot say "we stop here because that is what Marx said". On the contrary, we need to develop what I have just referred to as *a process of original knowledge from the social point of view.*

I am going to emphasize this. When Marx confronted the development of the machinery system as the most powerful form of the production of relative surplus value, he made it clear that at its base is the development of scientific and technological knowledge. But it failed to recognize the working class as the key subject of this development. It is possible that this impossibility was related to the very limited presence of scientifically conscious trained workers as the main productive attribute during Marx's lifetime. In contrast, if we look at ourselves gathered here today, what doubt is there that we are workers who

develop science? What doubt can we have that scientific awareness is the main productive attribute that capital demands from our labor power? Of course, these are certain workers with certain conditions, and whose productive attributes are as alienated in capital as those of any other. But I say, we cannot think, for example, that critical and revolutionary scientific consciousness should be brought to the working class from outside, because it would not be able to produce it by itself. Of course, it is not Marx, but later authors, who make this proposal, but he himself does not go so far as to define the working class as the concrete subject of the development of science.

Now, if the producers and bearers of scientific consciousness are members of the working class, the problem we have to face is why the conception that they do not belong to the working class dominates among scientists, even among those who study the current general social relationship and have critical approaches to it. Overcoming this appearance requires confronting the transformation in the material reality of labor, of which we ourselves are bearers. Today's workers are bearers of much more complex determinations than those that Marx could face. For this reason, we need to advance in a process of original knowledge from the social point of view because we are facing these determinations for the first time. If in this process we find that there are concrete forms that no longer correspond to what Marx proposed, it is necessary to move forward on those concrete forms.

Let's look at this methodological question in relation to knowledge about Latin America, and I raise it around a specific problem that has touched me in a directly personal way. At the end of the sixties and beginning of the seventies of the twentieth century, a whole discussion arose in Argentina about the validity of *Capital* as an instrument to account for the social process that was being experienced. It was claimed that it is a text written for nineteenth-century England and that it no longer existed. And, indeed, when one looked at the forms taken by the accumulation of capital in Argentina, it was visible that they contrasted with those exposed by Marx. Anecdotally, there were even those who said that the problem was that Marx did not recognize the "Peronist national being" of the Argentine working class, which made it useless. Faced with this situation, there seem to be two alternatives: the first is to say something like "well, this has nothing to do with what I have as an object of study, so I throw the work in the trash and start again". The second is to say "well, it doesn't matter, I have to answer this specific question by sticking exclusively to what *Capital says*". From my point of view, both alternatives are wrong. The answer to such a situation is that I have to look at this concrete form, which does not correspond to the general development, and ask myself: what specificity determines this concrete form?

Why is the specific concrete form presented as the very negation of the generic determination? The way to do this starts from recognizing the need for generic determination, to reproduce through thought its unfolding until discovering the reason for its realization under a concrete form that apparently contradicts it. And this path begins as one of recognition from the social point of view as it goes through the unfolding of the concrete forms achieved in *Capital*, to become one of original knowledge with respect to Marx's work insofar as it needs to advance on more concrete forms than those presented there.

I'll give two examples. First, Marx starts from the value of commodities until he advances in their development until he shows how the unity between production and social consumption is established in the capitalist mode of production through the formation of the general rate of profit, through the equalization of the different rates corresponding to the specific conditions prevailing in each sphere of production. However, it is obvious that the rate of profit of a small capitalist who barely manages to stay in business and that of an international automotive terminal, for example, are far from equal. What to do? An alternative is to simply resolve that the equalization of profit rates is no longer valid and that the value of commodities now has no objective determination but a subjective determination, as the theory of monopoly capital affirms. The other is to ask about the necessity that makes the formation of the general rate of profit take concrete form in the difference in the capacities of accumulation of capitals that are differentiated by their magnitude with respect to the productivity of labor required to participate in the determination of the value of commodities.

The second example refers to Marx's discovery of how the production of relative surplus value imposes on individual capitals the need to continually develop the productivity of the labor of their workers, under the penalty of being swept away by competition. However, with reference to Latin America, the productivity of labor put into action by the largest capitals in the industrial sector of Argentina and Brazil is substantially lower than that governed by competition for the same commodities on the world market. Moreover, it is notable that these are subsidiaries of the same individual capitals that compete in the world market from other countries, but that here use insufficient scales of production and obsolete technologies to sustain that competition, and that nevertheless they are valued at rates of profit even higher than those obtained in those other countries. So, the question is to start from the global unity of the capitalist mode of production to discover the specificity of these national processes of accumulation that makes the individual capitals in question act freed from the general necessity to advance in the development of the productive forces. Once

again, Marx's work is absolutely valid.

IF: Do you think that there should be a rereading of your work at the same time as an adaptation of it to our context?

JI: I would return to this: why am I going to read it? I am going to read it because I have a problem, and my problem is that I want to answer the question of who I am. I will do it in those terms because I want to answer who I am as a political subject, why I am this. I face what I am taught at the university and find that it is something that does not satisfy me. The majority of students, the "normal" people, do not have that problem; it is foreign to their consciousness, while you find that you do have that problem.

EC: Why did our consciousness arise?

JI: I'm going to put it more cruelly: because you are "abnormal." "Normal" people are satisfied with what they are taught. Why can't you be satisfied with that? One might say: "It's just that I'm such a brilliant individual that I won't accept anything uncritically," thus showing that your "abnormality" leads you down a barren path. Or one could ask oneself: insofar as I am a social being, bearing a social determination, why am I demanded to complicate my life instead of being an individual who flows with their university education? Am I going to burden myself with conflicts? Do I want to study more than what is required of me just to later become a seller of labor power? Consciousness does not arise abstractly within each of you; it arises from the unity of the organization of the process of social life. There is a social need for individuals like you to exist.

EC: Based on the above, what can Marx's analytical framework offer us in the face of the economic, financial, cultural and social crises that are currently occurring?

JI: Well, in your question there is an economic crisis, on the one hand, and a social crisis, on the other hand. I always use the example of the University of Buenos Aires: the first thing the university says to a student who is concerned about studying and understanding what social relations are like and how social life is organized in their society, is that economic relations should be separated from social relations: in one building is the Faculty of "Economic Sciences" and in a different one that of "Social Sciences". So, what is being said to the economics student, in particular, is that economic relations are not social relations; So, if you want to study social relations you have to go to another building of the university. Similarly, the person who is wanting to study sociology or political science is told that, if he wants to study economic relations, his place is in another building.

So, what are economic relations? I propose an approach to this in the following way: one can say that there are three kingdoms; there is the realm of the natural, there is the realm of the social, and there is the realm of the divine. There is a neoclassical economist, Ferguson, who became famous and his microeconomics manual was widely used in the world for many years. I had to study with that manual. At the time when the author confronted the Ricardians, he added a prologue to his book in which he indicated more or less verbatim: "while this work was in print there were a series of criticisms of the theory of the production function that seem to be true and that would invalidate much of what this text says." But he then added that until econometricians proved whether this was true or not, whether it was relevant or not, "to believe or not to believe in the theory of the production function is a matter of faith," and he closed the question by stating "I have faith." From this, we could say that neoclassical economics belongs to the realm of divinity. But, leaving aside this grotesque episode, when we are told that economic relations do not belong to the realm of the social, then what we are being told is that they belong to the realm of the natural. And, in fact, this is what classical political economy tries to impose on us, when it affirms that human labor produces objects that can be exchanged by nature, and neoclassical economics, when it affirms that useful and scarce goods are exchangeable by nature.

EC: Is a crisis a natural process?

JI: Let's put it like this: human life is a natural process that has the most complex form of all natural processes because, in fact, it is capable of confronting the rest of nature as a means to itself. It is, then, a natural process that develops its organization under the specific form of a social process. Crisis is not a problem of nature. Other historical forms of society could enter into crisis due to natural circumstances, but capitalist crises are a normal movement of the way in which the life of society is organized. The capitalist mode of production without crisis does not exist.

EC: Now that you mention other forms of society, it is inevitable to ask yourself if you think it makes sense to talk once again about the construction of a different society and bring concepts such as socialism into the discussion. In addition to this, who do you think could be the social actors that promote a transformation in capitalist social relations?

JI: From my point of view, talking about the construction of a different society becomes an abstraction if one does not start from the development of the determination of its historical subject. How to build a different society? The problem is not the concept of socialism, but, as we have already discussed, the determination of the generic human being as a historical subject, bearer of concrete determinations in his condition as a historical subject.

The question might hint that the issue is outdated. In my opinion, to ask whether something is out of fashion or not, is to empty it of meaning, it is to make it seem as if it were something that exists in the head, in the fantasy of individuals. So, we talk about things that are modern or old-fashioned and the problem does not happen there; the problem is to recognize oneself in the condition of historical subject. You propose that the social mobilizations would not be homogeneous, since they include very varied social groups: students, housewives, peasants, workers and many more. My point of view, in this regard, is that one has to answer oneself because of the condition of social subject of which one is the bearer. Among the things that seem to be in vogue is the conception that there is no determination and no need for transformation. This affirmation is synthesized in the postmodern approach.

The first thing we must be clear about is what determination means. Every actual existence carries within itself a power to be realized, which this actual existence realizes, transforming itself into a new actual existence, which, in turn, carries within itself its own potentiality to be realized. The organization of our action through the reproduction in thought of the real concrete on which we are going to act, consists in ideally accompanying that movement until we can recognize that action of ours as the necessary concrete form of realizing the potentiality of the object, directing it in the direction that we propose as subjects. Now, potentiality to be realized or already realized, and necessity to be realized or already realized, are synonymous. And an actual existence can carry its necessity to be realized in the form of a simple necessity, i.e., of immediate realization, or in the form of possibility, or so to speak, of the necessity to be realized, which is at the same time the negation of the necessity to be realized. Possibility, even mediated in its realization by possibility itself, is the general form of determination. What human action does is give body to that possibility.

So, the question one has is why a multiplicity of transformative subjects currently appears, who claim to be alien to any class identity, and more specifically, who refuse to recognize themselves as specific expressions of the working class, as a generically determined subject in its condition as the bearer of the need to overcome the capitalist mode of production. The answer starts from looking at the course that the accumulation of capital

has followed in the world unity of its movement and its national forms, in what can be defined as two great stages of capitalist development from the nineteenth century to the present.

I characterize the first stage by the development of the national processes of capital accumulation that I call "classical", which concentrate within their territory the industrial production of the generality of the goods they consume. The initial case par excellence is that of England, and then that of the United States. At this stage, the basis of the growth of labor productivity is in the constitution of a worker who is relatively universal in terms of his productive attributes, that is, relatively undifferentiated from one worker to another. And this condition extended to national spaces where a certain degree of industrial development occurred. For example, in Argentina and, subject to its concrete history, in Mexico.

Faced with the need to produce a relatively undifferentiated labor force, as the political representative of the total capital of society at each national level, each national state takes into its hands the mass production of these productive attributes: it is the period of development of public education, public health, public services, etc. Consequently, the workers have access to these conditions of production of their labor power, not in their immediate condition as sellers of it, but in their condition as citizens.

In accordance with this, the stage is characterized by the development of processes of centralization of capital as property of the State, within each national sphere. In some cases, as in the Soviet Union, it was a process of absolute centralization of capital as the property of the working class. And, I remark, it is about this centralization and not about the overcoming of the capitalist mode of production. There are also partial centralizations of capital as the property of the State. In Mexico, for example, I understand that oil production had that structure.

The two needs of capital that characterize the stage have the political and trade union action of the working class at the national level as a necessary form of realization. For example, capital needs a more educated labor force, and this need takes shape in the power of the political and trade union action of the working class at the national level. The capital of these national spheres needs to be centralized as the property of the State in order to express its power, and it is not the parties of the capitalist class that do this, because such centralization implies a partial or total abolition of private property within the country. On the contrary, the political parties of the working class do.

So, it is a stage characterized by the formation of unions and political parties of the mass working class. The advance of the working class as the subject of the transformation of

social conditions implies advancing towards a process that entails the abolition of private property, which entails the capacity to take the alienated social relationship into one's own hands. However, the action of the working class is emptied of this content at the stage when it falls into the ideological appearance that it was about to overcome or even had already surpassed the capitalist mode of production, or into the ideological appearance of the "welfare state". The latter is nothing more than a most miserable euphemism, since in the capitalist mode of production for the working class there is no well-being but exploitation, and the state is the exploiter of the working class as the political representative of the total capital of society.

This stage extends until the third quarter of the twentieth century, at which time the development of labor productivity on the double basis exposed reaches its culminating point and, therefore, has generated by itself the conditions for its overcoming. First, the process of developing the machine system based on the relatively undifferentiated worker continues to have two forms of manual labor at its very core: the calibration of the machinery and the assembly of the machinery. But, at the same time, technological development based on the undifferentiated worker has reached the point where it is in a position to convert both jobs into an attribute of machinery by computerizing its calibration and robotizing the assembly process. Second, the centralization of capital by states clashes with the national scope of the accumulation processes in question.

From the last quarter of the twentieth century, together with the displacement of the manual work of calibration and assembly by the application of the computerized machine and the line of robotic assembly, capital is no longer served by the undifferentiated worker. Now it needs strongly differentiated workers. It needs, on the one hand, workers with more and more productive attributes based on the development of their scientific consciousness although, of course, as always alienated and fetishistic, capable of carrying out an increasingly complex work. On the other hand, workers with increasingly limited productive attributes to perform the work simplified by the development of computerized machinery and robotization.

This transformation clashes with the previous national form of capitalism. As we have already seen, at that stage the conditions of reproduction of labor power were accessed, not simply as a seller of it, but also as a citizen, that is, in the condition of universal individual within the national space. Differentiation is imposed, then, mediated by the development of a new modality of international division of labor. In the previous stage, in parallel with the production of relatively undifferentiated workers in some national spheres,

the development of labor productivity on the same basis had generated other national spheres characterized by the presence of an enormous mass of relative overpopulation, basically constituted by the peasant population and the rural working population that had become surplus for capital. In the new international division of labor, capital is going to take it as a labor force with limited attributes, extremely cheap, and it is going to put it to work to perform simple labor.

In turn, the old classical countries now tend to specialize in the most complex work. And when they require labor power to perform extremely simple work locally, they obtain it through legal and illegal immigration, through the gradual political integration of countries with overpopulation workers in the case of Europe, and simple commercial integration with neighboring countries in the case of the United States. So, in this case, on one side of the border there will be the workers who do the most complex work, and on the other side, the workers who do the work absolutely simplified.

Any tendency towards the universality of the production of labor power characteristic of the previous stage is reversed, even within each national space, in the production of strongly differentiated individuals: for the workers who do the complex work, more training, more access to use values, on the basis of their individual wages. For their part, for the workers in charge of doing the simplified work, nothing; neither education, nor health. And not to mention for the masses of the surplus working population which is consolidated in pauperism. With regard to this last portion of the working class, I always consider it necessary to remark that, by wrestling from it the exercise of its capacity to work and then this capacity itself, that is, the exercise of the attribute and then the attribute itself generically proper to the human being, capital is tearing away its humanity, reducing it to the condition of the animal.

The capitalist organization of the new technical base erases the material basis that allowed the working class to recognize itself, with all the exceptions that this had, and even if only within each national space, as a determined social subject. Thus, what was the basis for the solidarity that constitutes the working class is cracking on all sides. No more worker relatively undifferentiated by his productive attributes, no more public health, no more public education.

At the same time, with the power given to it by its new technical basis and the consequent international division of labor, the process of centralization of capital passes beyond all national borders. Now there are Nation States that, from the national point of view, decentralize their capitals, and that from the point of view of world unity may be

participating in a process of centralization on an international scale.

The political force of the working class thus loses its two objective bases. The mass political parties of the working class are dissolved and, when their remnants circumstantially assume the management of the State, they immediately show their impotence to advance in a different course. The level of unionization also tends to fall amid deteriorating working conditions. Now "neoliberalism" is the political expression of the movement of the new double base on which the accumulation of capital develops in its world unity and in its national forms. The most developed expression of the previous double base, the USSR, dissolves and its remnants emerge as crude expressions of the new double base.

With the growing disappearance of universal abilities and universal needs, the discourse arises that the working class no longer exists. Instead of being able to look and understand what is happening inside the working class, the fragmentation of the class develops. The worker performing the most complex work looks at the worker performing the simplest work and says, "this one is not like me." The worker performing the simplest work looks at the one doing the most complex work and says, "this one is not like me." Both look at the worker made redundant by capital itself and say, "this one is not like me"; and the one on one side of the border looks at the one on the other side and gives the same response. A brutal fragmentation of what was the basis of recognition of the working class as such appears.

Conscious action requires starting from recognizing identity as a working-class identity and then progressing by acknowledging differentiated identities. However, the smaller identity begins by denying the general identity. Thus, for example, even with a critical intention, one might state the need for unity among students, women, and workers, as if students and women were not already part of the working class itself, when the former are producing their labor power as the only commodity they will have to sell, if they are not already selling it, while the women are students, sellers of labor power, and producers of future wage labor power. That is to say, instead of recognizing specific differences within the general category of the working class, one starts by seeing these specific differences as if they were constitutive of social subjects independent from each other. Similarly, beyond any specific determination, peasants displaced from the land, who have no other means of subsistence than selling their labor power, and who cannot even find a buyer for it, are members of the working class in a surplus situation for capital.

The condition of historical subject is denied to the working class, ignoring that it carries within itself this condition because, over and above its unity, which appears

circumstantially fragmented, it continues to be the alienated subject that produces the transformations in the materiality of labor and, therefore, in the development of the productive forces under the certainly contradictory forms of the capitalist mode of production. The uselessness of the mass parties of the working class is affirmed because they are bureaucratic and mechanistic. And it appeals to the small identities, which instead of recognizing their will as a concrete form of their social being, start from attributing to themselves an abstract will that determines their social being as transforming subjects.

We could well say, then, that the first problem of the political organization of the working class is that it does not have a political organization that starts from recognizing the historically specific determination of its necessity. And this recognition is based on the recognition that the affirmation of the working class as a free political subject is the way in which its alienation develops as an attribute of capital, as a historical form of social relations that leads the productive forces of labor to the overcoming of that alienation itself. Because capital is not the abstract opposite of working class. Capital is the objectified social relation, the product of the labor of the working class, which confronts it as a power that is alien to it and dominates it.

And this domination reaches the point that the fullest expression of alienation is what the working class does to itself when it converts a part of itself into something that is left over for the very process of human life, by transforming, in the name of capital, a part of its own body into a surplus working population. And it is the working class that thus acts as an attribute of capital because, at this stage of historical development, it is not simply the one that produces capital with its labor, but it is its own members who give consciousness and will to the organization, to the management, of that production.

Nowadays, the question of the political organization of the working class as a historical subject lies in establishing the relationship of solidarity that constitutes it, in contrast to its fragmentation into workers with developed productive attributes, workers with absolute degradation of their productive attributes, and workers from whom capital first takes away the exercise of their ability to work and then the ability itself, condemning them to the condition of surplus. This issue is intensified by the existence of national borders and by the competition for the sale of labor power among workers from different national contexts. From my point of view, the first unavoidable step to confront this double fragmentation, overcoming the multiplicity of its appearances, lies in the production of a working-class consciousness that advances in its political freedom by recognizing itself in its concrete determinations as a subjectivity alienated in capital. I always emphasize that Marx's "Capital"

is the original objectification of this recognition and of the specific historical powers that determine the working class as the revolutionary subject that will overcome the capitalist mode of production. Thus, we return to the question of original knowledge from a social perspective and its relation to our process of individual knowledge.

For all these reasons, I find that the rise of transformative approaches that are enclosed in the vindication of small identity, as well as those that are conceived as an expression of a free will abstracted from determination as a concrete form of the process of capital accumulation, are manifestations of the current political weakness of the working class.

I now add a determination that already makes a singular circumstance regarding the way in which you and I deal with this question of the identity of the subject potentially capable of overcoming the capitalist mode of production. I belong to a generation that has the "advantage" over yours, so to speak, of having been formed and begun its adult life in the culminating phase of the previous stage. Certainly, when at that time one looked around one always saw the process of social life cut out by the national spheres, always with brutal differentiations, always with a mass of surplus working population, always massive annihilations of the working population, world wars, etc. But, over and above these specific fragmentations, the same concrete form that the development of the productive forces took allowed us to glimpse what Marx synthesizes in the "Grundrisse" as the historical role of the capitalist mode of production through its objectified social relation: to produce individuals with universal capacities and universal needs. Instead, you are the full product of this stage of capitalism where concrete forms go visibly against what is the general historical determination of the capitalist mode of production. You are developing your own productive attributes as members of the working class, already in a world that has differentiations in these attributes as a starting point, which are also becoming more acute. This raises the additional appearance that the capitalist mode of production lacks any historical necessity in the direction of the universality of the working class and, therefore, of the constitution of the working class as the universal revolutionary subject.

For me it is fundamental to recognize the generic historical identity and only on this basis can one answer by overcoming appearances, and of course if you do not take this new step it is useless to have recognized that generic identity to govern your own action, the following: if this is my generic identity, what specific determinations do I have? It is clear that I have an accumulation of specific determinations, but these are forms of my general determination. It is not that my general determination has disappeared, but that I realize it

under that accumulation of concrete forms.

IF: To conclude, focusing geographically on Latin America, where concrete proposals for political, social and economic organization to confront the capitalist relationship are being discussed today, could a vision that is based on Marx's work be useful for us to understand the different forms of organization that coexist in this region, such as good living, and the peasant and indigenous movements that fight for the defense of their territory?
JI: Again, we have to take up the general determinations and then move forward on the concrete and specific forms. What Marx developed are the general determinations of the capitalist mode of production. Latin America is a concrete form of the capitalist mode of production; therefore, it is the bearer of all these general determinations. Then, what one has to answer is: why do these general determinations take specific forms in Latin America? Why do they also take different specific forms in the various national spaces within Latin America?

I take as an example a research we carried out with Valeria Iñigo Carrera, a research anthropologist at CONICET, on the displacement of the native peoples of the Argentine Chaco from rural production and their consolidation in a situation of growing pauperism, taking two rural indigenous communities as a concrete expression of this process. We begin by reproducing the unfolding of the material determinations of labor and of the productive attributes of the worker as a generic condition of human life, and then move on to the unfolding of the inversion of human productive subjectivity, and its concrete form of political subjectivity, as an attribute of the general social relation of the capitalist mode of production. that is, as an attribute of capital. We thus come to present the development of this investment to the point of recognizing it with respect to the generation of a relative overpopulation of workers, surplus for the needs of capital. Up to this point, the critical recognition of Marx's original development is at the very core of the study. From this point, we move forward by deploying the concrete forms with which, under the specificity of the Argentine national process of capital accumulation, the determinations previously recognized as belonging to the general unity of the capitalist mode of production are realized.

We continue to advance in the development of what Marx synthesizes as "the reproduction of the concrete by the path of thought" unfolding the movement with which the general social relation of the capitalist mode of production, already under its Argentine national specificity, has taken shape through the concrete historical condition of being an original population. This movement is based on the expropriation of the original hunter-

gatherer communities of the Chaco of their main means of production, that is, the land, violently enclosing them in reductions in order to, with the mediation of the same violence and evangelization, convert them into cheap labor force for the cotton and sugar capitals that settle on their former territory; the next step is to transform it into a latent surplus population as a source of migrant labour force equally cheap for the capital of the urban centers; finally, capital expropriates it from its condition as a productive subject until it is reduced to pauperism, to advance again on the lands where its rural communities are settled, which are now suitable for soy production. We thus recognize how, in little more than a century, what Marx synthesizes as the "general law of capitalist accumulation" unfolds in its entirety under the specificity of operating in a national space such as that of Argentina on an indigenous population.

Peasants displaced from the land are not displaced from the land because they are abstractly peasants; they are displaced from the earth because the development of the productivity of labor governed by the movement of capital turns them into surplus population for the very process of production of human life, which means the annihilation of the human life of these people. This is the capitalist mode of production; capitalism is barbarism. Everything that the working class advances in overcoming the capitalist mode of production by developing the productive forces of labor, it does so at the expense of itself. This is the alienation of human subjectivity in the current social relation, in capital, discovered by Marx.

It is not possible to start by abstracting the immediate condition of indigenous or peasant community to explain what powers are enclosed with respect to the overcoming of the capitalist mode of production. The question is the other way around: it is necessary to start from the general social relation which today governs the world unity of the human process of social metabolism, and then to answer the question of why this general social relation takes a specific form which appears to be opposed to it, and even apparently independent of it, in order to answer about the transformative powers of which that specific social form is the bearer.

An ideologue like John Holloway believes that the issue is to change the world without taking power, although he concludes that he has no idea how to do it. He then proclaims that it is better not to know, and that what matters is to unleash the carnival of the oppressed. The Argentine experience and that of other Latin American countries has taught those of my generation firsthand that overcoming the capitalist mode of production is nothing like a carnival, and that songs glorifying action that refuses to acknowledge its determinations and prides itself on its irrationality achieve nothing more than leaving their supporters

defenseless.

In summary, Marx is indispensable for responding to questions about the nature and historical potentials of the organizational proposals around Good Living and of the peasant and indigenous movements that fight for the defense of their territory.

IF: We appreciate your time.

JI: On the contrary, I thank you for this space that you opened to my political action in the process in which you are fighting for the development of your scientific consciousness as members of the working class.